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SUBJECT: Danes Support Strong EU Biofuels Sustainability Criteria

REF: State 99217

¶1. (SBU) Summary: According to officials in the Ministry for Climate and Energy, Denmark fully supports the French initiative to develop sustainability criteria by the end of this year. Denmark hopes strong sustainability criteria can be established before the UN climate conference (COP-15) in Copenhagen in December 2009. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) We conveyed Reftel points to Peter Larsen, Head of Section of the Climate and Energy Policy office in the Danish Energy Authority on September 18. He told us that Denmark supports ambitious sustainability criteria of up to 45% lifecycle emissions savings before 2015, to rise to 50-60% afterwards, depending on the state of technology. Denmark was pleased the EU Industry Committee recently advocated similar targets.

¶3. (SBU) From another ministry source, we had learned that Denmark believes that for technical reasons, political negotiations on this issue must be finalized this year so final agreement can be reached in early spring 2009, before the EU Parliament election and before the new EU Commission is in place. Larsen confirmed these were Denmark's goals, but was uncertain whether this timeline would be accomplished.

¶4. (SBU) Regarding internal dynamics, Larsen said the Climate and Energy ministry has the lead in formulating the Danish position on EU biofuels policies, as with international climate change negotiations. He said the climate ministry consults widely with other relevant ministries, including agriculture, before government negotiating positions are taken. The government will also consult with the Danish parliament on this issue next week, and is hopeful that its position will be supported by a broad consensus there.

¶5. (SBU) Denmark is participating in weekly PermRep meetings in Brussels where this issue is being discussed, and is preparing for the EU Energy Council meeting on October 10 and the EU Environment Council meeting on October 20, in Luxembourg, where this issue will feature.

¶6. (SBU) Our Danish interlocutors expressed appreciation for U.S. interest in collaboration on this issue.

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